


# The Second Step: Knowledge



Progress to Perfection (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to study our challenging but also inspiring theme for this week, "Progress to Perfection." In our previous talks this week we've seen that perfection is the goal set before us for our personal development as Christians. First, we took note of the command of Jesus, "Be perfect." Then of the example of Paul who said, "I'm pressing on to perfection."

In our last two talks we've begun to look at the seven successive steps to attain this goal set before us by Peter. Peter not merely tells us the goal but he gives us seven successive, practical steps. He breaks it down into a series of achievable steps. Let's look at these steps as Peter states them in 2 Peter 1:5–7.

> "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; from perseverance to godliness; from godliness, to brotherly kindness; from brotherly kindness, to love."

Those are the seven steps. The starting point is faith. From faith we move up to goodness; from goodness to knowledge; from knowledge to self-control; from self-control to perseverance; from perseverance to godliness; from godliness to brotherly kindness; from brotherly kindness to love. Notice love is the goal.

While we pointed out and emphasized that the starting point is faith and the first step up is goodness or excellence, I explained that it doesn't just mean some kind of religious goodness but it means general excellence. That whatever you do you do it because you're a Christian. You apply your faith in such a way that it works in your daily life.

I took three simple examples. The teacher, the housewife, a young person. Becoming a Christian, if you're a teacher, should make you a better teacher. If you're a housewife it should make you a better housewife. And, if you're a young person, it should make you a better young person. Faith works. Faith that doesn't work is dead. And the world has a right to demand the evidence in our lives of the faith that we

profess. So, that first step up is goodness or excellence.

Today we are going to look at the second step up from goodness, it's knowledge.

Primarily, knowledge of God's will. In other words, it's not achieved by secular education, by the study of many books, by attending a university. All those things may be good and necessary but that's not the kind of knowledge we're speaking about in this progress to perfection. The kind of knowledge we're speaking about is spiritual. And it is possible to have much intellectual knowledge and no spiritual knowledge at all.

Let's look at what Paul says in Philippians 1:9–11. He's writing to Christians and he says:

> "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

He prays for them that they may "abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight." And that result will be they can discern, they can distinguish between what is good and what is evil, what is the will of God and what is not the will of God. And that the result will be manifested in their lives. This kind of knowledge produces results that are manifest. It's summed up, really, in the word "fruit" and the final end is that it brings glory and praise to God.

In Colossians 1:9–10 Paul writes along the same lines. He says:

> "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and might please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."

It's a similar prayer to the prayer for the Philippians. he specifically prays that they may be filled with the knowledge of God's will. I like that word "filled." It means it leaves no gaps, no areas where they don't have a knowledge of God's will. And he talks about spiritual wisdom and understanding, not intellectual. He says, "We're praying this that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way."

The implication is clear that if we don't have this knowledge of God's will we cannot lead a life that is worthy of the Lord and we do not know how to please him because we don't know what pleases him.

And again, he emphasizes fruit. He says at the end, "bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God."

There are four points that emerge from these two prayers of Paul. First of all, he is speaking about a knowledge that is spiritual, not intellectual. He combines it with such words as wisdom and insight. So, it's spiritual knowledge, not just academic education or even theology.

Secondly, it's a continually increasing knowledge. It's most important to understand that the Christian life is not a static condition. It's compared to a walk or a way. It's something that we're continually moving forward in and we have never arrived at all the knowledge we need. We should be continually increasing in knowledge.

The third point is that this knowledge produces discernment or sensitivity to the will of God in making practical decisions. When we're faced with choices and decisions, this kind of knowledge makes us sensitive to the will of God. We are able to choose that course which is the will of God for us. Without this kind of knowledge many times we're faced with decisions and we don't know what to decide.

The fourth point about this kind of knowledge is that it results in fruit to God's glory. It produces results in our lives that could not be achieved without this kind of knowledge. And these results bring glory to God. Jesus said, "Let men see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." It takes this kind of knowledge to produce the good works which will cause people to praise God. I just want to emphasize that wherever we talk about knowledge in connection with the Bible it's not something abstract, theoretical, theological, philosophical. But, it's something very practical and down to earth that produces results in our lives.

I've said already once this week the world has a right to demand that we produce results which are the evidence of our faith. Speaking of this spiritual knowledge we need to understand that it has one primary source and that source is God's word, the scriptures.

I want to read to you four verses from Psalm 119 that all trace this kind of knowledge back to the word of God. Verse 9:

> "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word."

Verse 11:

> "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Verse 105:

> "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

Verse 130:

> "The entrance of your words give light; it gives understanding to the simple."

Just let's look at the practical results that can be obtained from studying and applying God's word. The first is, how can a young man keep his way pure? That's a very relevant, practical question in today's world. Is it possible for a young person, man or woman, to lead a pure life? The answer is yes but only if we live it according to the word of God. So, the word of God is the source of a pure life.

Then David says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." I heard somebody comment once, "One of two things will happen. Either the Bible will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the Bible." And I believe that's true. The Bible, God's word, can keep you from sin.

Verse 105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." You don't know what way to walk. You feel you're in darkness. There is a source of light. God's word may not cast light on the remote future but it casts light on the very place where you are now, on your feet and your path. You do not ever need to take one step in darkness. There's enough light in the word of God to show you where your feet are and where to plant the next step. And that's all you really need to know.

Finally, in verse 130, "The entrance of your words give light; it gives understanding to the simple." So, you may feel unqualified. You may think of yourself as uneducated and with perhaps not too much mental ability. But if you let God's word into your heart and mind, it gives you light and it gives you understanding to the simple. That's what we need to achieve the kind of knowledge that will take us upward on the path to perfection.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time. Next week I'll be sharing with you further on this challenging theme, "Progress to Perfection."

If you would like to study this theme of "Progress to Perfection" more fully in a time and place of your own choosing with opportunity to play back passages of special interest to you, all my five talks this week on "Progress to Perfection" are available in a single, carefully-edited, 60-minute cassette.

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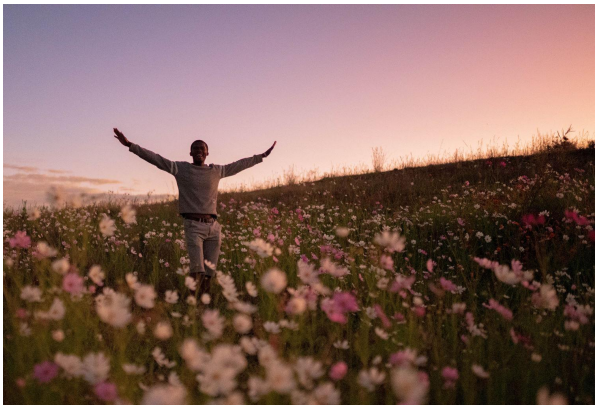
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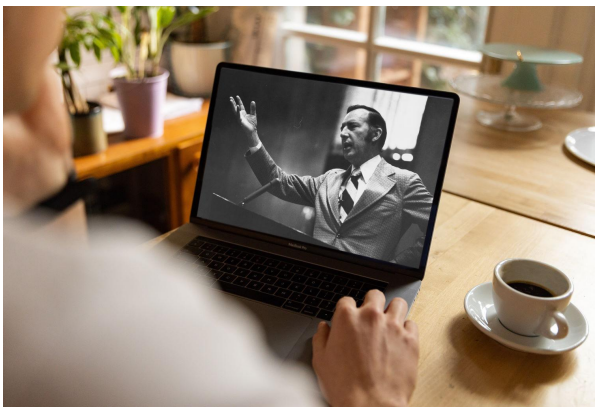
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